(a) the details of agreements made for import of Australian wheat during the year;

(b) the reasons for import of wheat;

(c) the arrangements made for delivery and distribution of the imported wheat-and

(d) the complaints made in regard to wheat received mixed with weeds?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) and (b) due to untimely rains during the sowing seasons, the Ministry of Agriculture had initially estimated that the production of wheat during 1997-98 Rabi season was likely to be 64.51 million tonnes as against the production of 69.27 million tonnes during the previous year. Government had therefore, decided to import upto 20 lakh tonnes of wheat during 1998-99, against which the STC finalised contracts from import of 15 lakh tonnes (± 5%) of wheat from Australia. A total of 14.15 lakh tonnes of wheat has arrived in India against the above contract.

(c) and (d) Presence of some weed seeds was detected in the Australian wheat. Such weeds are in integral part of any foodgrains harvest and it is not unusual to detect weed seeds in any bulk import of foodgrains. The Australian wheat conforms to the provisions of the contract and the specifications laid down in the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act and is fit for human consumption. Government has advised the FCI to issue the imported wheat stocks to the State Governments against their monthly allocation for distribution through PDS exclusively in non-wheat growing areas. It has been decided to release additional quantities of wheat to the State Governments/UT Administrations for open sale ensuring that in case of open market sales, imported wheat goes only to the Roller Flour Mills.

कीमतों को स्थित करने हेतु गेहूं का आयात

2202.**श्री डी.पी.यादव** : क्या खाद्य और उपभोक्ता मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार गेहूं की कीमतों को स्थिर करने के लिए विदेश से गेहूं का आयात कर रही हैं;यदि हां,तो कितनी मात्रा का आयात किया जा रहा हैं;

(ख) देश में वर्ष 1997-98 में खाद्यान्नों की कुल कितनी मात्रा का उत्पादन हुआ तथा क्या उत्पादन की यह मात्रा गत वर्ष के खाद्यान्न उत्पादन की मात्रा से अधिक हैं;यदि हां तो कितनी ?

खाद्य और उपभोक्ता मामलों के मंत्रालय मेंराज्य मंत्री (श्री सत्य पाल सिंह यादव): (क) जी,हां । 1998-99 के दौरान सरकार ने राज्य व्यापार निगम के जरिए 14.15 लाख टन गेहूं का आयात किया था

(ख) 1997-98 के दौरान खाद्यान्नों का सम्भावित कुल उत्पादन 193-12 मिलियन टन होने का अनुमान हैं जबकि पिछले वर्ष के दौरान 199.32 मिलियन टन खाद्यान्नों का उत्पादन हुआ था जो लगभग 6.20 मिलियन टन की गिरावट का द्योतक हैं ।

Impact of ban on Export of Onions on NHRDF

2203. SHRI SITARAM KESRI: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the ban on export of onions has put the National Horticulture Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF) in a tight financial spot; and

(b) if so, what steps have been taken or are proposed to be taken to neutralise the impact?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) NAFED has informed that the ban on export of onions has put the NHRDF in a tight financial spot as the development fund paid by onions exporters including NAFED based on their voluntary decison has been a major source of fund for running the organisation.

(b) NAFED has informed that the NHRDF is managing its resources from increased feed production and distribution programmes. The NHRDF has also adopted economic measures by cutting down expenditure under various avoidable heads. It has also submitted more projects/schemes to National Horticulture Board on area expansion of onion, post harvest technology and seed production for financial assistance.

Reimbursement of 50% subsidy on Food Items to A.P.

2204. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has received any representation from the Andhra Pradesh Government that the Union Government should reimburse to the former fifty per cent of the subsidy required for distributing food items and other essential commodities in the State through the public distribution outlets;

(b) if so, details thereof and the reaction of Goverment thereto; and

(c) what other steps are being contemplated to contain the prices of essential commodities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) and (b) Yes Sir. A request from the Government of Andhra Pradesh for financial assistance to the extent of Rs. 10.00 crores on matching basis for supply of non-PDS essential commodities through fair price shops in the State has been received. Similar requests from other State Governments have also been received. No. decision has been taken in the matter.

(c) The Government has accorded the highest priority to the control and stabilisation of prices of essential commodities. Imports of items which are in short supply, like pulses and onion, -have been placed under OGL at zero percent import duty. Duty on the import of edible oils has been reduced to 15 percent from 25 percent in order to augment availability. Export of onions has been banned. The additional allocations of rice and wheat under the Public Distribution System (PDS) have been reviewed. A decision has been taken to release upto 40 lakh tonnes of wheat to the State Governments for open sale. Stringent action is being taken under the Essential Commodities Act and Prevention of Black-marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commudities Act by the State UT Governments against hoarders, black marketeers and other indulging in mal-practices in essential commodities.

NCCF supply to Government departments

2205. CHAUDHARY CHUNNILAL: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether no infrastructure is available with the NCCF for supply of stationery and other items of office use Government departments and supplies are effected through local supliers;

(b) whether any local supplier can supply any brand of item and the suppliers are not selected item-wise;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the details of items supplied by the local suppliers and manufacturers/ distributors/dealers, duly authorised (suparately), giving the brand names thereof, the cost of supply to NCCF and the rate at which NCCF supplied to Government departments?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) The NCCF, being an apex level consumer cooperative, have necessary infrastructurers to supply stationery and